

City of Mississauga
Corporate Report



<p>Date: September 25, 2023</p> <p>To: Chair and Members of General Committee</p>	<p>Originator's files:</p>
<p>From: Jodi Robillos, Commissioner of Community Services</p>	<p>Meeting date: November 1, 2023</p>

Subject

2024 Future Directions Parks, Forestry & Environment Draft Plan

Recommendation

1. That staff be directed to consult with the public and groups with interest to obtain feedback on the draft recommendations outlined in the “2024 Future Directions Parks, Forestry & Environment Draft Plan” and appended to this corporate report dated September 25, 2023 from the Commissioner of Community Services.
2. That the final plan be presented to Council for endorsement in the first quarter of 2024.

Executive Summary

- The 2024 Future Directions Parks, Forestry & Environment Plan serves as the guiding document for the provision of facilities, services and programs in the City’s Parks, Forestry & Environment division for both the short and long term.
- The draft plan assesses current and future capital and service delivery needs focussed around five strategic priorities that include: Growing and Connecting Parkland, Sustainable and Inclusive Design and Management, Expand, Protect and Restore Natural Areas, Efficient Provisioning for Facilities and Enhancing Park Experiences.
- The draft plan contains 44 recommendations shaped and developed with input from staff, the public and groups with interest. Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability were key lenses used throughout the plan’s development.
- This draft plan now requires further input and feedback from the public and groups with interest before being finalized.
- The implementation of the plan will be phased over the five to ten year planning horizon following ongoing validation and capacity to fund.
- The final plan is slated for presentation to Council in the first quarter of 2024.

Background

The Future Directions Parks, Forestry & Environment Plan serves as the guiding document for the provision of facilities, services and programs in the City's Parks, Forestry & Environment division. The plan provides a structured and forward-thinking approach to funding and resource allocation for capital and service delivery needs in the short and long term. To ensure the actions and recommendations remain relevant, the plan is updated every five years with the previous iteration completed in 2019.

O2 Planning and Design was the consulting firm awarded to undertake the 2024 Future Directions Parks, Forestry & Environment Plan. Below is an outline of the project's key phases and aimed timeline:

Project Phase	Timeline
Develop Background Reports	October 2022 – March 2023
Public Engagement	October 2022 – March 2023
Develop Draft Plan	April – October 2023
Present Draft Plan to Council	November 2023
Public Feedback on Draft Plan	November – December 2023
Present Final Plan to Council	February/March 2024

The updated Draft Plan (see Appendix 1) contains 44 recommendations developed in consultation with user and community groups, staff and the public. In addition to engagement, several background reports on population, benchmarking and service provision levels helped to inform the plan. Some of the common themes throughout the plan include:

- Capital and Service Delivery Needs
- Areas of Intensification
- COVID-19 Impact
- Reconciliation
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

City Structure and Population Growth

Since 2004, Future Directions Plans have organized the City into six functional service areas as a basis for sub-geographic analysis. In 2022, the six original service area boundaries were revised to better reflect the evolution of the City's urban structure, transportation network and growth patterns. The 2024 Future Directions Plan now includes eight service areas that align with the City structure outlined in the new Mississauga Official Plan.

As part of the planning process, an analysis of projected population growth was conducted. Growth forecasts show that Mississauga's overall population will grow from the 2021 estimate of 795,040 to 852,060 by 2031. Beyond the current Future Directions planning period, Mississauga's population is projected to reach 995,040 by the year 2051.

There are a number of Intensification Areas (as defined through the Mississauga Official Plan) in which development will primarily take place. By 2031, 47 per cent of forecasted residential population growth in Mississauga, amounting to 26,500 people, is being directed to the Urban Growth Centre (referred to as the Downtown in the previous Official Plan) and its associated character areas. The majority of the remaining forecasted growth is directed at Mississauga's Major Nodes (25 per cent) and Neighbourhoods (21 per cent).

Support for Mississauga's Housing Strategy

Recommendations in the Future Directions Plans help to support Mississauga's housing strategy through the construction of new community infrastructure and redevelopment of existing facilities. This includes but is not limited to community centers, libraries, fire stations, parks, and spaces for culture activities and creative sector use.

Comments

Strategic Priorities

The 2024 Future Directions Parks, Forestry & Environment Draft Plan identifies five strategic priorities. The following further details these priorities and includes some of their associated recommendations. The full list can be viewed within the appended 2024 Future Directions Parks, Forestry & Environment Draft Plan (see Appendix 1).

Strategic Priority One: Growing and Connecting Parkland

Based on existing areas of deficit and future population growth, there is a need for Mississauga's park system to continue to grow and improve connections to parks. Some of the recommendations include:

- Redevelop the grounds of the Living Arts Centre to increase access to parkland and facilities in the Downtown Core and identify and prioritize the redevelopment of other vacant or underutilized parkland parcels.
- Prioritize the delivery of complementary and appropriate park uses like trails and unprogrammed park space within greenlands to increase access to parkland in areas that have a parkland deficit.
- Develop a marina and new waterfront parkland in Port Credit to maintain the character of the area, provide residents access to additional public parkland along the waterfront, and improve the natural environment.
- Prioritize identified facility investments and future parkland acquisition within/adjacent to 'Equity Opportunity Areas', Strategic Growth Areas and in non-residential character areas that are experiencing residential development.

Strategic Priority Two: Sustainable and Inclusive Design and Management

Mississauga needs to utilize existing parks to accommodate a range of evolving demands and uses. The overarching perspective is how to advance multi-functionality, inclusivity, and

sustainability in the design and management of parks. To achieve this, some of the recommendations include:

- Update the City's minimum design standards for basketball, outdoor ice skating facilities, soccer fields, baseball diamonds, cricket pitches and spray pads to maximize opportunities for multi-use facilities.
- Update the City's design standards for leash-free zones to enable separated sections for small and large dogs as well as standards for urban scale and neighbourhood scale facilities.
- Consider converting wickets on cricket pitches to artificial surfaces where wear-and-tear is interrupting playable days in the season or is needed to accommodate extended hours.
- Develop approaches to remove barriers and enable marginalized and equity-deserving groups access to more spaces within parks.

Strategic Priority Three: Expand, Protect and Restore Natural Areas

The need to expand, protect and restore natural areas is embedded in the City's Official Plan. Parkland plays a significant role in supporting these objectives through the planning and design of parks. Natural areas are also critical for supporting biodiversity and climate change resilience. Some of the recommended actions include:

- Include naturalization and/or tree planting as a park amenity option in the City's public engagement process.
- Identify priority areas to expand, protect and restore natural areas and the urban forest.
- Raise awareness of conservation, biodiversity, and the role of parkland in addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation through partnerships with community groups and other initiatives

Strategic Priority Four: Efficient Provisioning for Facilities

Future Directions provides the framework and recommendations for a variety of outdoor recreational facilities. This strategic priority is focused on how best to meet demand for new facilities in an innovative, fiscally informed, and environmentally responsible way. Some of these actions include:

- Extend facility provision standards to non-residential areas where residential development has been added.
- Add six new neighbourhood scale leash-free zones in addition to one proposed facility in Service Area D and E.
- Provide four new public multi-use tennis and pickleball court locations within Service Area E (in the Cooksville area) and Service Area H (in proximity to the waterfront) as priority locations.
- Construct six new spray pads to address access gaps.

- Provide four more outdoor ice skating facilities with a preference for refrigerated systems where appropriate and feasible.

Strategic Priority Five: Enhancing Park Experiences

A focus on the quality of park experiences is important due to challenges with growing the parkland system. There are several measures to enhance user experiences, thereby making the park system more enjoyable, convenient, and accessible. Some of the recommended actions include:

- Develop a permitting system to approve non-motorized watersport rentals.
- Install Electric Vehicle chargers at select Destination Parks.
- Review the feasibility of expanded park animation, including music performances (additional locations for concerts in parks), food trucks, buskers, and public art. Enable the inclusion of these elements for smaller capacity event opportunity.
- Ensure each service area has at least one park that can host larger events.

The full list of recommendations are contained within the appended 2024 Future Directions Parks, Forestry & Environment Plan (see Appendix 1).

Strategic Plan

The 2024 Future Directions Parks, Forestry & Environment Draft Plan aligns with all five of the City's Strategic Pillars: Move, Belong, Connect, Prosper and Green. The strategic pillars reflect a common purpose: a collective desire for success in leadership, quality of life, and civic pride – all of which are relevant to the Future Directions Plan.

Steps have been taken to ensure the 2024 Future Directions Plan also aligns to the updated Strategic Plan scheduled to be launched in 2024.

Engagement and Consultation

Over 15,000 people were engaged in the shaping of the Future Directions Parks, Forestry & Environment Plan through a variety of methods including, focus groups, face-to-face meetings, and an online survey that garnered over 7,000 responses. The Future Directions 'Have Your Say' engagement webpage, mississauga.ca/futuredirections, and yourfuture@mississauga.ca email address provided additional forums for input.

The consultation phase initiated with staff meetings and focus groups in October 2022, followed by the launch of the online public survey in November 2022. Some of the various staff groups that were consulted include Environment, Indigenous Relations, Diversity and Inclusion, Facilities and Property Management and Planning and Building.

The next step in the planning process is to obtain feedback on the draft plan from the public and those previously engaged. This phase is set to occur from November to December 2023, and any required revisions to the draft will be completed in early 2024. The final plan is slated for presentation to Council in the first quarter of 2024.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact resulting from the recommendations in this report. The implementation and funding of initiatives included in the 2024 Future Directions Parks, Forestry & Environment Plan will be subject to approval of the annual budget and business plan.

Conclusion

The Future Directions Parks, Forestry & Environment Plan responds to themes of intensification, population growth, and capital and service delivery needs for both the short and long term. The draft plan was developed through extensive research, collaboration, and public engagement, and serves as a comprehensive guide for the future of parks in the City. With Council's approval as recommended in this report, the draft plan will be presented to the public and groups with interest before being finalized. This process ensures that the City's park facilities and services evolve to meet the changing needs and preferences of its diverse population, while creating a vibrant and inclusive urban landscape that fosters physical and social well-being for all.

Attachments

Appendix 1: 2024 Future Directions Parks, Forestry & Environment Plan



Jodi Robillos, Commissioner of Community Services

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