



REPORT

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Mark Taylor, Senior Landscape Architect

DATE: October 13, 2023

REPORT NO.: RP-2023-014

SUBJECT: Gellert Park Expansion – Final Concept Approval

RECOMMENDATION:

That Report No. RP-2023-014 dated October 13, 2023 regarding the Gellert Park Expansion - Final Concept Approval be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council approve the Gellert Park Expansion – Final Concept (Appendix D) and direct staff to proceed with detailed park design for the “Park Expansion Phase” (Appendix E);

AND FURTHER THAT staff report back to Council with a detailed funding strategy for the Gellert Park Expansion – Final Concept.

KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- Gellert Community Park was constructed in 1999 and the Town purchased additional lands to expand the park in 2016.
- Town staff have carried out a comprehensive design & public consultation process to advance the park design for the Gellert Park lands.
- Final program elements for the Gellert Park Expansion – Final Concept were developed based on needs identified in past studies, public consultation, stakeholder feedback, technical review and park design principles.
- The overall design contemplates three phases including the ‘Park Expansion Phase’, ‘Community Centre Expansion Phase’ and ‘Outdoor Ice Phase’.

- There is an opportunity for an air supported structure for year-round hard court play to be incorporated pending results of the Air Supported Dome - Request for Expression of Interest (RFEOI) outlined in Report RP-2023-015
- The Park Expansion Phase cost estimate is approximately \$6 million based on the current design.
- The 2024-2032 Capital forecast includes \$6 million for the Gellert Park Expansion.
- The 2025-2033 long range capital forecast is being updated to reflect more current revenue forecasts in light of recent changes to Bill 23 legislation, and DC/Parkland Dedication matters before the OLT.
- Staff will complete a detailed financial review and funding strategy, to consider options to advance the funding of the park in late 2024 to coincide with the tender for the Park Expansion Phase construction, in coordination with the 2025 Budget review process.
- Staff recommend that Council approve the Gellert Park Expansion – Final Concept as outlined in this report.
- Staff will proceed with detailed design and construction document preparation while the detailed financial review is completed.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

Gellert Community Park (Georgetown South Community Park) was constructed in 1999 and the Town purchased land to the south in 2016 located between Danby Road, Norval United Church and the existing Gellert Community Park. The existing park includes three baseball diamonds, a splashpad, a skatepark, a major playground, a rugby/football field, six tennis courts, a major soccer field (lit/irrigated) and asphalt walking paths (Refer to Appendix A - Existing Conditions Plan). The Town will be developing the expanded area into high quality community parkland. The expanded parkland is needed to serve the existing population in the surrounding community which has grown significantly in recent years and will also be important to serve new residents in the Vision Georgetown Secondary Plan area.

Since fall 2022, Town staff have been designing and consulting with the public and stakeholders to develop a concept plan for the park expansion. This plan increases the useable area of the park, adds new features, and enhances the existing uses.

Park Design Process:

The park design process was carried out as follows:

- development of 3 initial concepts (Refer to Appendix B)
- consultation round 1 with public and stakeholder input
- synthesizing the feedback into a preferred concept (Refer to Appendix C)
- second round of consultation

- development of the Gellert Park Expansion - Final Concept based on all the feedback to date (Refer to Appendix D - Final Concept & Phasing).

Phasing has also been developed, beginning with the Park Expansion Phase (Refer to Appendix E – Park Expansion Phase).

Future steps in the project include:

- detailed park design
- development of a detailed funding strategy
- tender and construction of the Park Expansion Phase.
- develop plans and funding strategies for future phases including the Community Centre Expansion Phase and the Outdoor Ice Phase.

Contributing studies that provide direction towards the park design include:

- Georgetown Action Sports Needs Assessment 2017
- Gellert Phase 2 Feasibility Study (2019)
- Recreation & Parks Strategic Action Plan (2020)
- Outdoor Court Sports Strategy (2021)
- Outdoor Ice Strategy (2023)
- Outdoor Sports Strategy (underway)

The park design was developed using the following guiding principles:

- Georgetown Inclusive & vibrant
- sensitive to context
- responds to established needs
- sustainable & resilient
- adaptable and maintainable.

General Consultation Themes:

General themes of the public consultation responses (both rounds) included:

- importance of balancing hard surfaces with green natural areas
- importance of connected walking path network
- desire to increase the quantity of dedicated pickleball courts and request for beach volleyball courts
- appropriate screening and buffering to surrounding neighbours
- desire for refrigerated skating trail and associated washroom/changeroom facility
- importance of shade for user comfort
- desire for functional public art in the form of shelters/shade and seating
- design to balance high quality facilities and financial limitations
- desire for air supported structure to provide year round hard surface (pickleball, tennis, basketball, volleyball) play

Stakeholder groups also requested larger tournament level facilities for beach volleyball, pickleball and soccer.

Park Final Concept:

The Gellert Park Expansion - Final Concept is centered on a primary central pathway connecting from Danby Road to the Gellert Community Centre. The existing full-size lit soccer field is being relocated, to provide space for parking for the new park amenities and future community centre expansion. The relocated natural turf major soccer field (lit/irrigated) is proposed to be constructed centrally within the park expansion lands, and due to its size, is a primary factor in the rest of the layout of the final concept.

Additional active sport features include: public pickleball courts, multi-purpose courts, public tennis courts, public beach volleyball courts and an asphalt pump track. The plaza space by the community centre entrance will provide opportunities for socializing, drop/off pickup and includes a basketball court to complement the existing skatepark. The multi-court within the plaza can also offer a variety of programming opportunities and pairing with the community centre. The features included are primarily focused on providing publicly accessible amenities which may have opportunities for permitted/club use as identified by stakeholder groups in the future.

To connect the new park features, new looped lit pathways surround an open lawn/event green and will connect to the existing pathway network and neighbouring communities. Additional parking is included in a parking lot off Danby Road.

Located along the pathway network will be additional amenities for individual or general public use including: 2 areas with fitness equipment, a main pavilion/performance node a new playground area including natural elements, and an allotment garden along the Danby Road frontage.

Throughout the new and existing park, additional seating and shade features are proposed: 3 picnic shelters paired with park features and shade sails around the existing splashpad.

In the open lawn/event green area, a refrigerated skating loop and washroom/mechanical building create a vibrant activity area for all seasons.

Generous berming (landscaped hills) and buffer planting is provided along neighbouring residential properties to ensure minimal impacts of new park features.

Smaller park amenities (benches, drinking fountains, bike racks, wayfinding signage, etc.) will be incorporated into the park during detailed design.

The overall Final Concept provides a mix of active sport activities, passive and active green spaces, and a wide variety of new park amenities for use by the public. The park development will support many of the types of activities contemplated for the future community centre expansion and provide the community with expanded recreation opportunities at the park.

Major elements included in the Gellert Park Expansion: Final Concept include:

*minor changes from preferred concept are noted

New public use sport facilities	Two public beach volleyball courts *added Six lit public pickleball courts *increased from 4 to 6 Three lit multi-use basketball/multi court areas Asphalt pump track Two lit public tennis courts
Maintain existing permitted and club facilities	Six lit tennis courts (5 club, 1 public) Retain major lit soccer field (relocated)
Public park amenities	Playground with natural elements and climbers Fitness equipment (2 areas) Community allotment gardens Open lawn areas for gathering, play or relaxing Shade and seating throughout park Plaza space for public gatherings Adequate parking to serve all amenities and future phases Opportunities for public art and cultural elements (performance, functional art) Lit hard surface pathways providing neighbourhood connection, circulation and distance signage
Neighbourhood considerations	Appropriate landscape screening, berming and setbacks to provide a buffer from uses Strategic locating and design of park features to mitigate noise
Future Phases (subject to further study)	Community centre expansion (triple gym, seniors, youth and multipurpose rooms) Outdoor ice skating trail with washroom/utility building
Possible air supported structure for hard surface courts	Zone for potential air supported structure, subject to third party interest through RFEOI. Refer to Report RP-2023-015

Staff are recommending that Council approve the Gellert Park Expansion: Final Concept, as shown in Appendix D to serve as the basis for detailed design as well as the detailed financial review and additional study for future phases.

Stakeholder Group Requests:

As noted above some stakeholder groups requested larger tournament level or premium facilities (i.e., artificial turf). Due to cost and space limitations at Gellert and to ensure publicly accessible amenities for the growing population are included, staff identified that Trafalgar Sports Park would be a more suitable location for these uses and will work with stakeholders as the need for these higher-level facilities increases. Staff are continuing work on the Outdoor Sports Strategy which will inform a future

Trafalgar Sports Park Master Plan update, where these uses can be reviewed in more detail. (Refer to Appendix F – Stakeholder Group Responses).

Park Phasing:

To align with capital funding availability, additional study and design requirements the final concept includes three distinct phases. See Appendix D for the overall Phasing Plan. These are the:

Park Expansion Phase

Phase includes all the park features shown in the Park Expansion Phase plan (Appendix E).

Community Centre Expansion Phase

Phase includes construction of the expanded community centre building, associated parking, courtyard, outdoor amenity space beside building and pathway connections between the building and park. These elements will be funded as part of the Gellert Community Centre Expansion Budget.

Outdoor Ice Phase

Phase includes construction of an outdoor refrigerated skating loop feature and washroom/mechanical building. This phase is subject to additional study per the Outdoor Ice Strategy and detailed financial review.

Next Steps:

Following Council approval of the Gellert Park Expansion: Final Concept, staff will carry out detailed design, prepare construction drawings, tender documents and specifications for the 'Park Expansion Phase' elements.

Staff will continue to consult directly with stakeholder groups during the detailed design process on specific elements and details related to their groups (i.e., pickleball, tennis, beach volleyball, soccer, etc.)

It is anticipated that the project will be ready to tender in late 2024.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report aligns to the Town's Strategic plan recognizing the value to provide responsive, effective municipal government and strong leadership in the effective and efficient delivery of municipal services.

This report also identifies climate change and the environment as one of the Town's Strategic priorities.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report impacts and/or helps address climate change and the Town's resiliency through climate adaptation. Features in the park will include shade structures, significant tree planting, low maintenance drought tolerant perennial and shrub plantings, stormwater management and park design to adapt to climate change.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement has been conducted as follows: Online Survey, Open House/ Workshop, Stakeholder Meetings and as noted below.

The project was communicated to the public through social media, media outlets, large site signage, mailout to surrounding neighbourhoods of the park, direct emails to stakeholder groups and signage within Town facilities. Online engagement was conducted through a [Let's Talk Halton Hills Project Page](#) and two rounds of public consultation were undertaken. The first round took place between April 11 and May 8, 2023, reviewed the 3 initial park concepts, included a public open house April 26, 2023 and received 322 survey responses. From this feedback, staff developed a preferred concept which formed the basis for the second round of consultation. The second round took place from July 12 to September 8, 2023, included a public open house July 19, 2023 and received 525 survey responses. Most survey responses received represented families within the community, and provided significant representation of the community's desires for the design of Gellert Community Park. Town staff maintained discussions throughout the process with stakeholder groups and the staff technical committee. Metrics to date include 6000 webpage views, 2900 social media impressions, 100+ combined total of attendees for public open houses, and 847 survey responses.

All of the consultation feedback has been reviewed to inform the Final Design, will be made available on the Let's Talk Halton Hill's project page and is included as an appendix to this report. (Refer to Appendix G)

All members of the public and stakeholder groups were informed of this Council report.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

A cross functional team from multiple departments participated in the park expansion design. Staff from Recreation and Parks Department (Parks and Open Space, Community Development, Recreation Services, Facilities), Transportation and Public Works (Transportation, Public Works and Park Operations) and Business, Environment and Culture (Culture, Asset Management, Climate Change) were all part of a working staff group that provided input into the park design. Corporate Services (Finance) and Recreation and Parks (Community Development) staff also provided input for this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report has the potential to require funding in a future budget year and therefore needs to be referred to budget committee for tracking purposes.

Funding for the construction of the park is identified in the 2024-2032 Capital Forecast at a value of \$6 million, subject to the final design being evaluated for detailed capital and ongoing annual operating costs. The 2025-2033 long range capital forecast is being updated to reflect more current revenue forecasts in light of recent changes to Bill 23 legislation, and DC/Parkland Dedication matters before the OLT.

Overall budgetary pressures and impacts of Bill 23 will be reviewed as part of the Town's Long Range Financial Plan and Council's Strategic Plan and may affect the final timing of implementation (i.e., through additional construction phasing of park elements). Through the detailed design process, detailed cost estimates and operating costs will be developed. Recreation and Parks staff will work with Finance staff to undertake a comprehensive financial review to confirm the funding approach for the construction of the Park Expansion Phase and feasibility to fund the park construction in late 2024 in coordination with the 2025 Budget review process.

Reviewed and approved by,

Kevin Okimi, Director of Parks & Open Space

Paul Damaso, Commissioner of Recreation & Parks

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer