



REPORT

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Heather Kaufmann – Community Development Supervisor

DATE: September 24, 2024

REPORT NO.: CSE-2024-010

SUBJECT: Submission to the Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund – Eighth Line Park Expansion

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. CSE-2024-010, dated September 24, 2024, regarding the Submission to the Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund – Eighth Line Park Expansion, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council endorse the submission of an application to the Province of Ontario's Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund (CSRIF) for the Eighth Line Park Expansion project;

AND FURTHER THAT the Eighth Line Park Expansion project not proceed and remain unfunded in the Town's budget, unless (i) the Town receives the required funding via the Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund; and (ii) Council approves the financing approach outlined in confidential report CSE-2024-011;

AND FURTHER THAT staff report back to Council with the outcome of the Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund application process, including any potential next steps;

AND FURTHER THAT the Town establish a committee to lead a fundraising campaign for Eighth Line Park Expansion.

KEY POINTS:

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

- The Eighth Line Park Expansion project, previously referred to as the Gellert Park Expansion, involves a major redevelopment of the existing soccer field and

the addition of numerous new amenities, including pickleball courts, multi-purpose courts, beach volleyball courts, a pump track feature and outdoor fitness areas. This expansion addresses the identified and long-standing shortfall in community parkland. This would be the first of its kind park in Halton Hills, with a wide range of community sports facilities, features and sports groups served, right in the heart of Halton Hills.

- The Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund (CSRIF) Stream 2, offers up to \$10 million in capital funding. Staff are seeking Council endorsement to submit the Eighth Line Park Expansion project as the Town's application to this Fund. The total estimated cost for the project is \$8 million, with the Town required to provide a matching contribution.
- A fundraising campaign, led by the Mayor, is recommended to secure the \$4 million required to supplement the Town's portion of the Fund application.
- Due to the Town's current financial situation, and the unavailability of Development Charges as a source of funding, the Eighth Line Park Expansion project is currently categorized as unfunded in the staff recommended 2025 capital budget. If the CSRIF grant is not successful and/or if the financing strategy is not approved, the park expansion project will be put on hold and hence remain unfunded.
- Approval of this report will confirm Council's support for the CSRIF funding application for the Eighth Line Park Expansion.
- This project aligns with the Town's Strategic Plan priorities, including the focus to enhance community recreational infrastructure, support health and well-being, and address current and future recreational needs.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

1. About the CSRIF

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval for staff to submit a grant application under the [Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund](#) (CSRIF) – Stream 2: New Builds/Signature Builds.

Premier Ford announced at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) conference on August 19, 2024, that applications are now being accepted for the CSRIF. This provincial Fund is designed to provide capital funding for the construction, enhancement, and modernization of sport and recreation infrastructure across Ontario. The program supports large-scale projects that create or improve public recreational facilities, enhancing community well-being and accessibility.

CSRIF operates as a cost-sharing initiative, with varying levels of financial contributions from the province, depending on the applicant type. The program focuses on addressing critical gaps in recreational infrastructure, promoting community engagement, and ensuring long-term sustainability of sport and recreation spaces. The Fund offers up to \$10 million for new builds or major upgrades, with a strong emphasis on community need, economic impact, and overall value for investment.

Pending Council's consideration of this report and recognizing the highly competitive nature of the Fund, and hence the need to proceed as soon as possible, Town staff have advanced the CSRIF grant application process by collecting essential information, securing letters of support from community groups, and compiling relevant project details. Staff have met with the Mayor, CAO, key Town staff from across departments, as well as community stakeholders/organizations (ongoing) to ensure awareness and alignment on the project scope and grant application strategy. Staff have also consulted with a Ministry representative to confirm the project's suitability and to maximize the application's chances of success.

2. Project Details

Eighth Line Park Expansion (previously referred to as the Gellert Park Expansion given its location next to the Gellert Community Centre) is one of the Town's key recreational assets - serving as a hub for sports, outdoor activities and community engagement.

However, with a growing population and increased recreational needs, the Town has identified a significant shortfall in community parkland. This issue will be further explored later this year as part of the Parkland Acquisition Study update. Existing Town parks are facing pressures from increased usage, leading to user conflicts and impacts on surrounding neighbourhoods. Despite additional parkland being planned for the Vision Georgetown lands, the latter parkland will only meet the needs of residents of Vision Georgetown. It will not adequately address the broader community's needs, nor the Town-wide Park needs of new residents or the existing shortfall that exists throughout Halton Hills.

The proposed Eighth Line Park Expansion (Appendix A), will provide much-needed parkland and recreational amenities for Halton Hills residents, including a variety of new features such as a pump track, natural playground, new public tennis and pickleball courts, beach volleyball courts, multi-purpose courts, outdoor fitness areas, and the replacement of a major existing soccer field. An expanded Eighth Line Park, as outlined in report [RP-2023-014](#), will contribute to creating a complete community with access to important recreational/outdoor amenities in proximity to the major growth on the Vision Georgetown lands, supporting the province's focus on housing.

The Eighth Line Park Expansion also presents an opportunity for future seasonal indoor facility partnerships, such as an air-supported dome, in association with the pickleball and multi-court areas, as noted in [Memo CSE-2024-001](#) (dated May 31, 2024). Such partnerships could serve indoor sports needs while a long-term facility expansion strategy is developed.

Town staff are aware of the long-standing deficit for indoor sports facilities and the growing need of community organizations and their membership to access facilities. The Town's ability to meet this demand has been limited by its financial capacity, which includes the required upfront capital investment and the ongoing operating costs.

Support for the park's expansion has been demonstrated through extensive community and stakeholder consultations conducted as part of the park design process in 2023, as well as the [Town's Recreation and Parks Strategic Plan](#) in 2020. The [Outdoor Court Sports Strategy](#), approved in 2021, highlighted the increasing demand for additional tennis and pickleball courts, while the broader Outdoor Sports Strategy, currently in its final stages, emphasizes the growing demand for sports fields and indoor facilities. Both strategies have been developed through annual reviews and active engagement with community sports organizations, further validating the need for this expansion to meet the evolving needs of Halton Hills residents.

3. Budgetary Considerations & Fundraising Campaign

The Eighth Line Park Expansion project is currently unfunded in the upcoming staff recommended 2025 budget. Recognizing cost escalations, the estimated investment required to expand the park (as currently designed) is about \$8 million. This includes the new features, enhancement to existing park features, and design and construction cost contingencies. In addition to the capital investment for park construction, ongoing operating costs will be incurred related to park maintenance, repairs, and recreation sales and service (e.g. registration, permitting, customer service).

The Town's application to the CSRIF Fund will seek \$4 million in provincial funding. To secure the Town's contribution of \$4 million in matching funds, staff require approval of the proposed financing strategy which includes the undertaking of a focused and time-limited fundraising campaign. This will require the establishment of an internal committee, in consultation with the Mayor. This campaign will seek to garner additional/supplementary financial contributions from key stakeholders/businesses and community organizations to ensure that the project can proceed.

It is important to emphasize that, given the Town's existing financial position, in the event that the Town does not secure the required CSRIF funding, the Eighth Line Park Expansion project will not proceed and will remain unfunded.

A preliminary framework for a fundraising campaign, and key additional financial considerations, are discussed in Confidential Report CSE-2024-011. A committee is recommended to lead the implementation of the fundraising campaign.

4. Town's Approach to the Application

The CSRIF Fund application process is complex, requiring project management, extensive cross-departmental collaboration, data collection and the reprioritization/delay of pre-existing workplans – under very condensed timelines. This is a major workload undertaking, and funding is not guaranteed.

Town staff are focused on preparing and submitting a comprehensive and impactful funding application. The strategic approach involves the following key elements:

- Clear project vision and scope: Comprehensive and clear vision of the Eighth Line Park Expansion, highlighting the project's scope, objectives and anticipated community benefits.
- Demonstrating community need: Emphasis on the community's parkland shortfall to underscore the critical need for the park's expansion.
- Alignment with strategic plans: Alignment with key strategic plans/strategies, including Council's Strategic Plan, Outdoor Court Sports Strategy, Outdoor Sports Strategy, Recreation and Parks Strategic Plan, and the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.
- Phased development and prioritization: Phased approach to the project, including a focus on core amenities and a future expansion phase for the seasonal indoor facility (air-supported dome) and future outdoor ice facility.
- Community and stakeholder support: Demonstrated support from the community and key stakeholders.
- Value for money: Emphasis of the project's value for money, detailing how the funding will be utilized efficiently to deliver high-impact outcomes.
- Funding strategy and budget planning: Funding strategy to demonstrate financial prudence and readiness to proceed with the project.

Eighth Line Park Expansion would represent a major step forward in enhancing much needed recreational infrastructure for Halton Hills. By addressing the significant gap in community parkland and expanding local amenities, this project will provide invaluable benefits, including increased recreational opportunities and improved community well-being.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report identifies a safe and welcoming community as one of the Town's Strategic priorities. Expansion of the Eighth Line Park will increase access to parkland and ensure that facilities are provided to meet the needs of the growing community.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report is administrative in nature and does not directly impact or address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement was not needed as this report is administrative in nature. Significant public and stakeholder consultation has already been undertaken (and continues) as part of the park design consultation process, and the strategic plans and

studies that have been approved by Council in the past and which have been an input into the park's design.

Staff will continue to advance stakeholder/public consultations related to the detailed design of the park and the potential indoor facility (air-supported dome), including with community sports organizations in order to ensure that the detailed design phase is completed as planned to ensure the timing requirements of the CSRIF funding can be met.

Staff have also met with the Halton Hills Pickleball Association.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

The funding application and the Eighth Line Park Expansion is being led by the Community Services Department. Given the complexity and significant scale of the initiative, a cross-departmental effort has been mobilized with active participation and support from Community Development, Parks and Open Space, Finance, Economic Development, Corporate Communications and Strategic Initiatives.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Confidential Report CSE-2024-011 outlines key financial considerations related to the Town proceeding with the CSRIF application for the Eighth Line Park Expansion.

Reviewed and approved by,

Kevin Okimi, Director of Parks, Community Development & Environment

Damian Szybalski, Commissioner of Community Services

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer