

## Report to Community & Protective Services Committee

**To:** Chair and Members  
Community & Protective Services Committee

**From:** Kelly J. Scherr  
Deputy City Manager, Environment and Infrastructure

Cheryl Smith, Deputy City Manager, Neighbourhood and Community-Wide Services

**Subject:** Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update

**Date:** November 11, 2024

## Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Environment and Infrastructure and the Deputy City Manager, Neighbourhood and Community-Wide Services, the following actions be taken with respect to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update:

- a) the following report **BE RECEIVED** for information and the project milestones and timelines identified in Section 2.4 **BE ENDORSED**;
- b) the following matters **BE ENDORSED** for review with the update:
  - i. projected city-wide population growth and the geographic distribution of future users of park and recreation services;
  - ii. a forecast of parkland needs;
  - iii. park types, definitions and servicing areas;
  - iv. equity and inclusion strategies and opportunities;
  - v. strategies and standards to provide mitigation and adaptation to Climate Change;
  - vi. municipal park infrastructure provision best practices (demographics, trends, types of amenities, etc.);
  - vii. quality and quantity standards for parkland and park amenities;
  - viii. quality and quantity standards for pathways, park system linkages and open space lands;
  - ix. the confirmation of provision targets and service standards for pickleball, cricket, community gardens, dog parks, community gathering spaces, and the provision of potable water;
  - x. infrastructure requirements for parks located near intensified growth areas;
  - xi. opportunities for service provision partnerships, including school boards and businesses;
  - xii. identification of policies, strategies and action plans to guide Master Plan implementation; and,
  - xiii. a 15-year forecast of park infrastructure needs to inform updates to the capital budget and growth needs for the 2027 Development Charges Background Study.

It being noted that operational service delivery standards and detailed lifecycle renewal needs are outside of the scope of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

## Executive Summary

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan, approved by City Council on June 25, 2019, assists with the planning, design, funding, building and maintenance of London's parks

and recreation system. Provision targets based on population forecasts are established for various sport, recreation, and park amenities. The rapid growth of London's population in recent years and updated growth forecast scenarios have greatly increased in numbers compared to what was originally planned in 2019. As a result, the previously utilized growth projections are out of date and no longer suitable to calculate future amenity provisions. An update of the Master Plan is needed now, to align future provisional target with City Council's approved population growth projections and consistent with the regular 5-year update cycle previously adopted. This information will support the 2028 Development Charge Background Study which is a large funding source of growth-related capital infrastructure.

## **Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan**

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is aligned with the Strategic Areas of Focus and the following outcomes in the City of London's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan:

- Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion
- Economic Growth, Culture, and Prosperity
- Mobility and Transportation
- Wellbeing and Safety
- Climate Action and Sustainable Growth
- Safe London for Women, Girls, and Gender-Diverse and Trans People
- Well-Run City

Outcomes:

- The City of London is a leader in becoming an equitable and inclusive community.
- A well-planned and growing community.
- London has safe, vibrant, and healthy neighbourhoods and communities.
- London is an affordable and supportive community for individuals and families.
- The City of London demonstrates leadership by taking meaningful actions to address and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, gender-based violence, and sexual violence.
- London is a destination of choice.
- Londoners of all identities, abilities and means can move throughout the city safely and efficiently.
- London has a strong and healthy environment.
- London is one of the greenest and most resilient cities in Canada in alignment with the Council-declared climate emergency and the Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- London's infrastructure and systems are built, maintained, and operated to meet the long-term needs of the community.
- Londoners experience good stewardship, exceptional and valued service.

## **Analysis**

### **1.0 Background Information**

#### **1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter**

- Community and Protective Services Committee (CPSC) - Parks and Recreation Master Plan Annual Report (March 18, 2024)
- CPSC - Parks and Recreation Master Plan Annual Report (January 31, 2023)
- Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee (SPPC) - City of London Corporate Growth Projections 2021-2051 (December 6, 2022)
- CPSC - Parks and Recreation Master Plan Annual Report (March 29, 2022)
- CPSC - Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update (June 17, 2019)

## **2.0 Discussion and Considerations**

### **2.1 Background and Purpose**

The City of London strives to offer high quality parks, recreation programs, sport services and facilities that engage residents and visitors of all ages and abilities. Parks, recreation, and sport play a significant role in community building through the provision of public amenities, active and passive activities, opportunities for structured and spontaneous play, strengthening of neighbourhood connections, and more.

Planning is critical to provide desired service levels in a sustainable way over time. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is the Council-approved service delivery plan that assesses the current state of the parks and recreation system, identifies gaps and needs, and plans for future investment strategies. It directs the planning, funding, design, and delivery of London's parks and recreation system.

As London grows and changes, the interests and needs of residents change. Policies, community priorities, and service delivery strategies need to shift and remain current. How we provide services is also informed by changes by the Federal and Provincial governments. The Master Plan update is a process to assess current conditions in order to establish new recommendations to better reflect community needs and strategic priorities. The Master Plan will provide overall direction and guidance for decision-making and for future investments regarding parks and recreation infrastructure.

This project consists of an update to the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and a refinement to various parks-related service standards. Although recreational and sport service needs will still be reviewed with this update, it is recognized that a more comprehensive review of parkland requirements, park classifications, and park infrastructure and amenities would be beneficial to inform future service delivery plans. This focus is intended to better prepare the City of London for implementation of Provincial changes related to parkland forecasting, increasingly intensified growth areas (and their associated park servicing needs), community desires for more green space and enhanced amenities, and actions for strategic priorities such as equity and inclusion and Climate Change.

### **2.2 Project Goals and Objectives**

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update will review outcomes to date and help direct priorities with considerations to current trends, policies and strategic priorities of the City of London. The existing recommendations will be reviewed and updated to reflect current conditions and alignment with Council's Strategic Plan and other City priorities and strategies. It will guide decisions about parks, recreation, sport services, and facilities while considering financial sustainability. This update will be completed in time to inform the next Development Charges Study planned for 2028.

The project has the following objectives:

- complete a background review of the current Master Plan with updated demographic data, trends and population analysis;
- review the current inventory of parks and recreation facilities and recommended provision targets and service standards to help establish a summary of infrastructure needs for a 15-year period.;
- assess the list of recommendations from the 2019 Master Plan and identify key accomplishments, as well as revised or new recommendations, considering current trends (e.g. population growth, community engagement feedback, etc.), current park and recreation facility inventory, and current City policies and strategies such as Council's Strategic Plan and the Mobility Master Plan along with current Provincial and Federal initiatives; and,
- engage with the public to inform the actions and standards established through the Master Plan update.

Benefits of the project include:

- an understanding of current context for park and recreational services in London;
- an understanding of current status of Master Plan outcomes and ability to share information with the community;
- an opportunity to revise or add recommendations that align with service delivery priorities identified by Londoners and through a review of industry standards;
- the ability to focus available resources and budgets on the most important Parks and Recreation priorities for the short, medium and long-term, and plan for financial sustainability over time;
- the identification of gaps between desired targets and available funding, and exploration of alternative sources of funding; and,
- continuing to provide high quality parks and recreation amenities, facilities and programming services that meets the needs of Londoners and visitors.

### **2.3 Project Scope**

As highlighted above, the project scope will principally focus on parkland needs and associated amenities. Recreation and sporting needs will be assessed based on updated population and demographic projections, as well as participation trends; however, this assessment will primarily be of a technical nature. As the recreational service delivery standards contained in the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan are generally current and implementation experienced unexpected delays due to the Covid-19 pandemic, only targeted consultation with the public and user groups will be undertaken (e.g., cricket).

A consultant will be retained to assist staff with the update to park provision service standards. In particular, the following matters will be reviewed:

- projected city-wide population growth and the geographic distribution of future users of park and recreation services;
- a forecast of parkland needs;
- park types, definitions and servicing areas;
- equity and inclusion strategies and opportunities;
- strategies and standards to provide mitigation and adaptation to Climate Change;
- municipal park infrastructure provision best practices (demographics, trends, types of amenities, etc.);
- quality and quantity standards for parkland and park amenities;
- quality and quantity standards for pathways, park system linkages and open space lands;
- the confirmation of provision targets and service standards for pickleball, cricket, community gardens, dog parks, community gathering spaces, and the provision of potable water;
- infrastructure requirements for parks located near intensified growth areas;
- opportunities for service provision partnerships, including school boards and businesses;
- identification of policies, strategies and action plans to guide Master Plan implementation; and,
- a 15-year forecast of park infrastructure needs to inform updates to the capital budget and growth needs for the 2027 Development Charges Background Study.

Public input will be sought at the outset of the project to provide information on current service standards outlined in the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and to receive preliminary feedback on current levels of parkland provision and availability of community amenities. Additional public engagement will take place through open houses, the City's Get Involved London website, and other available channels. Recommendations pertaining to changes to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update will be provided to the public in advance of Council's consideration of final approval.

The analysis and recommendations will be focussed on growth infrastructure needs and priorities for service improvement for amenity provision. The Master Plan update will not examine lifecycle renewal needs, which are separately examined in association with the Corporate Asset Management Plan. Similarly, the project scope will not include an assessment of operational service delivery standards, which are being reviewed separately by Civic Administration.

## 2.4 Project Timeline

The proposed project timeline and milestones are identified below in Table 1.

**Table 1: Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update – Timeline and Milestones**

Item	Timeline	Milestone
Background research and information gathering	Q4 2024 – Q2 2025	Updated inventories, growth allocations, best practice scans and identification of servicing trends
Public engagement (education and consultation)	Q1 2024 – Q3 2025	Community open houses, social media postings and Get Involved website
Draft Master Plan update preparation	Q2 2025 – Q3 2025	Draft Master Plan update document
Tabling of draft Master Plan update	Q3 2025	Council receipt of draft Master Plan update document
Public consultation on draft Master Plan update	Q3 2025 – Q4 2025	Community open houses, social media postings and Get Involved website
Finalize Master Plan update	Q4 2025	Revised Master Plan update document
Submission of Master Plan update for Council approval	Q1 2026	Adopted Parks and Recreation Master Plan update

It is anticipated that project components and milestones will have overlapping timelines. Importantly, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update is required to be concluded by early 2026 in order to be incorporated into the 2028 Development Charges Background Study. It is important to note the current recommendations in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan continue to be actively implemented.

## 3.0 Financial Impacts and Considerations

The Master Plan Update will be funded through existing operating budgets for staffing needs and associated materials. The City's life-to-date capital budget includes funding for consulting services to support the Master Plan and additional funding in later years could be advanced, if required. Capital funding is split between Development Charges and tax-supported sources.

## 4.0 Next steps

Consistent with prior updates to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, staff will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for consulting services. External support provides the ability to supplement the knowledge and experience of staff, and to contribute current sector best practices. It is expected that the successful firm will be highly experienced with park and recreation master planning. Additionally, the RFP will establish the need for capital planning and infrastructure cost estimates, which may result in the successful firm retaining a sub-consultant to assist with those specific tasks.

It is anticipated that a report to Council will follow, as specified in the Procurement of Goods and Services Policy to award any RFPs greater than \$100,000 in value.

## **Conclusion**

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan, approved by City Council on June 25, 2019, needs to be updated to reflect the rapid growth of London's population in recent years and the preferred updated growth forecast scenario adopted by Council. This information will support the 2028 Development Charge Background Study which is a large funding source of growth-related capital infrastructure. The review will also examine current service provision targets in relation to community priorities and industry standards. An external consultant will be hired through a competitive RFP process to complete this work and a report to Council will follow for approval of this award if required.

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