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<b>TO:</b>	<b>CITY COUNCIL MEETING ON JULY 24, 2012</b>
<b>FROM:</b>	<b>ANDREW MACPHERSON MANAGER, PARKS PLANNING &amp; DESIGN</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>OPTIONS FOR IMPROVING REG COOPER SQUARE</b>

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
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That the following report on options for improving Reg Cooper Square **BE RECEIVED** for information.

<b>PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER</b>
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**Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund (CIIF)** (Finance & Administrative Services Committee – July 16, 2012) [http://sire.london.ca/view.aspx?cabinet=published\\_meetings&fileid=54730](http://sire.london.ca/view.aspx?cabinet=published_meetings&fileid=54730)  
[http://sire.london.ca/view.aspx?cabinet=published\\_meetings&fileid=54731](http://sire.london.ca/view.aspx?cabinet=published_meetings&fileid=54731)

<b>BACKGROUND</b>
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**Background**

On July 16, Finance & Administrative Services Committee received a report from the City Treasurer, Chief Financial Officer advising them that the Government of Canada had recently released a new funding program.

On July 5, 2012, the Minister of State for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, the Honourable Gary Goodyear, launched the Ontario allocation of the Community Infrastructure Investment Fund (CIIF). The Fund provides \$49.6 million over two years for the repair and upgrade of community and recreational facilities across Ontario. CIIF funding is for rehabilitation or improvement, including expansion, of existing infrastructure that is non-commercial in nature. The program is being delivered by FedDev Ontario.

Funding will be cost shared and recipients may receive funding of up to \$1 million for a project and up to 50 per cent of the project's total value, however, in Ontario priority may be given to projects that require a federal contribution of 33.3 per cent. Applications for the CIIF program are due August 24, 2012.

During discussion on this item at the Finance & Administrative Services Committee, a motion was adopted for staff to review and advise Council of any options for improving Reg Cooper Square with a view to seeing if intermediate steps could be taken to improve it that may fit into the above funding program. This report is a response to this motion.

**Reg Cooper Square**

As part of the Victoria Park redesign process in 1998, a concept plan was prepared for Reg Cooper Square with the vision of softening and greening the plaza area. The addition of shade structures, trees and more seating would make the Square more attractive to daily users. A large lawn would support small, unamplified stage events in association with events at Victoria Park. Wellington Street was to be narrowed to two lanes to permit a safer crossing to Victoria Park. This plan was not finalized and would need fine tuning and confirmation.

The Square is constructed on a parking garage which creates weight restrictions for how features can be constructed in the square. This also increases demolition and construction costs. In 2012 dollars, it is estimated that total reconstruction of the Square in general accordance with the concept plan would cost \$3.0 million, excluding any costs associated with the parking garage structure.

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The waterproofing membrane in Reg Cooper Square over the parking garage also needs to be replaced. This will also include the control joint between the garage structure and Centennial House which will require masonry and storefront glazing repairs/replacement at the ground floor commercial spaces. This measure will cost \$2.3 million, for a total of \$5.3 million.

If there was a funding source for short-term aesthetic improvements that did not impact the parking structure, one or more of the following options could be considered:

- repair the planters in their existing locations;
- add planters on top of the existing pavers;
- augment existing planting beds;
- add outdoor public art pieces; and,
- add interesting lighting features.

The issue of upgrading Reg Cooper Square is closely connected to discussions on the future of the City Hall building and Centennial Hall. Administration is currently focusing on reviewing a proposal from Western University, but other options are also being considered. The future site of City Hall is closely tied to discussions regarding downtown economic development. Spending any significant amount of money on Reg Cooper Square prior to a decision on the City Hall building and Centennial Hall could result in significant “throw away” costs.

There is currently no funding available in the ten year capital plan to improve Reg Cooper Square. Even if the City applied for and received funding from the Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund (CIIF), this program provides only 50% or 33% of the funding for the project (depending on the level of CIIF funding approved). The City does not have the funding available for the City’s 50% or 66% portion of any projects.

Considering that applications for CIIF are not due until August 24, 2012, it is not likely that approval would be granted until October or November at a minimum. The CIIF program requires projects to be completed by March 31, 2014. To proceed with even the short-term aesthetic improvements, plans and details would have to be prepared and projects would have to be tendered quickly for work to be completed by the fall of 2013, the latest recommended time to schedule exterior projects to meet the CIIF deadline.

<b>Prepared By:</b>	<b>Recommended By:</b>
<b>Alan Dunbar Manager – Financial Planning and Policy</b>	<b>Andrew Macpherson Manager, Parks Planning &amp; Design</b>