

Community gardens, pickle ball courts questioned by Mavrinac community

By Brock Weir

The community has had no shortage of suggestions on what to do with recently-acquired six acre parcel of parkland on Mavrinac Boulevard, but last week provided them with the first official opportunity to weigh in on the concept.

Dozens of members from the Mavrinac community, as well as Aurora at large, turned out at Town Hall last Tuesday for a public information session and joint committee meeting to hash out a recently devised concept plan for the land.

Among their concerns was a proposal to put a community garden on the land, a concept which has garnered mixed reviews from all corners of Aurora since a group came forward last year with a proposal to turn a corner of McMahon Park into a garden with allotments for up to 20 Aurora residents.

‘Hopefully the community gardens will be nixed by the people,’ said John, a resident attending the committee meeting following the open house.

Added Brian: ‘One of the ideas we’re floating around is there is still a need for soccer pitches. I didn’t realise how big the impact [of putting pitches in Mavrinac Park] was, but many soccer pitches in the place of community gardens [was offered]. Having two little kids in soccer, I know the demand for soccer pitches is huge in the Town.’

Among the residents attending both sessions was Nahla Khouri, one of the more vocal proponents of the Town of Aurora taking action to secure the six acres of vacant land for parkland under the terms set out by the Town and the then property owner, Minto Developments, in their original subdivision agreement. The community around the park is generally supportive of the concept plan, but there was room for improvement.

‘People generally love it and are very appreciative of it,’ said Ms. Khouri on the results of an online survey. ‘There were four or five suggestions [from the majority], the first being no community gardens and replace it with some sort of normal gardens. Gardens were high on the list in their regular state. Another thing was to replace pickleball with mini-soccer fields or something along those lines.’

Pickleball, a combination of tennis and badminton, is popular among seniors, but Ms. Khouri suggested older adults living near the park said there is a preference for ‘fitness circuits’ over pickleball courts.

‘This is a phenomenal preliminary design and we are extremely appreciative of the great level of quality and excellent features that have been presented in it,’ she said. ‘Thank you so much for taking the time out of your busy schedules to be here and take this so seriously and put so much thought into it.’

From the suggestions offered by committee and community members alike at Tuesday’s sessions, the schedules of the Town’s Parks and Recreation Department could be even busier as they look at ways to incorporate suggestions into the concept plan.

Al Downey, Aurora’s Director of Parks and Recreation, said the primary takeaways from the open house were the concerns over the community gardens, a desire to have fitness equipment incorporated into the park in a similar way to the trails system in Sheppard’s Bush, whether or not 25 parking spots is too much for this particular area, and the merits of putting washroom facilities in place.

‘We compile this information and any information coming from the committees will be noted,’ Mr. Downey told residents. ‘We will be putting that together in a report to Council so that all members have the benefit of hearing what comments came from the public as well as the advisory committees. We will then be incorporating that into a new park design we feel addresses as many of those concerns as possible knowing there are some that can’t be [addressed].’

?We [will then be] looking for an approval of that park design by Council so that we can then move forward with detailed design and tendering. We hope to have this park tendered out sometime in 2016 so we can commence construction in the fall, at least with some earth works and servicing.?

The next steps on Mavrinac Park are expected to hit the Council table in July.