

## Outdoor fitness parks to be explored by Town

Throughout the global pandemic, more people than ever before have been getting out to local parks and trails to enjoy the fresh air, get some sun, and stay fit when most gyms and fitness centres have been closed due to the pandemic.

Although these facilities are opening back up, more options should be offered to residents to stay fit in the great outdoors, according to Councillor Rachel Gilliland

Last week, Council voted in favour of a motion from Councillor Gilliland calling on staff to investigate possible locations for a fitness park, along with potential upgrades to current parks, to ?give opportunities for residents to freely exercise safely outdoors, create possible Town programming, and potential rental opportunities to generate revenue.?

?I have to admit I have probably become a victim of the quarantine 15 or 20,? said Councillor Gilliland with a laugh at last week's Council meeting. ?I have been lacking motivation to go outside and find ways to exercise and keep myself in good shape, which only led to more anxiety about not exercising during the pandemic where several gyms were shut down?simply as a result of the pandemic. Then I discovered these outdoor fitness parks, which consist of pull-up bars, long benches, dips, push-up bars and much more. Think of it more like an outdoor adult playground, for lack of a better term, but this accommodates beginners to experts, seniors, teenagers and people who have accessibility [issues] as well.?

While some parks, such as Shepherd's Bush and Ada Johnson Park do have some circuit-style equipment already, she said some residents have shared with her the view that these pieces of equipment need updating and a better flow.

?The motion I present today is not intended to replace or compete with any traditional gym; rather it is to offer an extension to the community in an outdoor format,? she said. ?Essentially, I would like staff to find opportunities where outdoor fitness parks could be included, whether in one of the new parks we're going to create, or it could be in an existing park, especially in the southwest Aurora area, where we don't have a community centre. That is not to say that's where we would have a space, but it is worth a look.?

Council largely supported the motion, with the minor caveat that exploring these opportunities should be done alongside a review of the Town's Parks & Recreation Master Plan to see how these potential spots fit into the larger municipal picture.

?There is a long list of needs and wants that came out of the first [Master Plan] and I am sure there will be more needs and wants in the second one,? said Councillor Michael Thompson. ?Perhaps this can be incorporated into it because, at the end of the day, it will be part of that overall picture in decision-making. My preference is to see it rolled into the next update to the Master Plan, which sounds like it is just around the corner.?

Councillor Wendy Gaertner said she agreed with this assessment, expressing particular support for looking at opportunities in existing parks and greenspaces as lands for recreation within Aurora continue to be at a premium.

This was a view shared by Councillor Sandra Humfries as well who suggested the staff also look at potential spaces in the trails system.

?This is an opportunity to look at our trails to see if we can incorporate some of those stations along our trails if they don't fit properly in our existing parks,? she said. ?They could probably fit anywhere and this is a great opportunity. I love the idea of adding this as an overall view when we're looking at parks and our Master Plan to see where we can put these in and make it a consideration.?

?I appreciate the support around the table and this is just to get the ball rolling on where those opportunities are,? Councillor Gilliland concluded. ?I know there are some new parks that will be in construction mode in the next year or two for consideration. I think this will help us get an idea of what opportunities are out there, what the budget looks like [and] if we want to move forward or

include it in a master plan, this goes in tandem.?

**By Brock Weir**EditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter