

But what kind of park do Mavrinac residents want?

By Brock Weir

Now that Council has followed through on last week's decision to proceed with a design process for a new park on Mavrinac Boulevard, it will first have to start with what kind of a park the neighbourhood ? and the Town in general ? wants and needs.

While area residents have presented a nearly united voice on securing the land for a park, school or open space, in line with the ?premiums? they argue they paid for their own homes, some have expressed differing opinions on what amenities would benefit the area.

?We have splash pads and we have playgrounds, which is great for kids under 10,? said resident Michelle Boyer, referring to the playgrounds, skate parks and water features in nearby Ada Johnson Park and Hickson Park. ?We have nothing for tweens, nothing for kids, nothing for old people. There's lots of multigenerational families in my subdivision. Old people can't walk 20 minutes over to 2C to parkland, according to the new path system. We have to stay in our subdivisions, we need greenspace, we need parkland. We don't need any more playsets.?

Neighbour Charlie Muscat weighed in with similar views, who suggested a multi-use park where kids could get in touch with nature, provide parents and grandparents with a safe place to take the kids, and, for seniors, a quiet pace to relax.

But, for Catherine Collister, the Mavrinac Property presents an opportunity for children to get back to basics with the all-important concept of play. Children, she said, are the community's ?most vulnerable citizens? and they need people to speak up on their behalf.

Play, she said, ?is the universal language spoken by all children? and this is something Council should take into consideration when forging ahead with a park.

?I would urge Council to take the statistics and facts you have heard [over this debate] and wrap them in your values, in your experiences, wrap them in your own memories of childhood when outdoor play was a rite of passage,? she said. ?Some of you will remember hide and seek, Red Rover, others may recall arguing about rules in kickball or stickball or taking turns at jump rope or creating imaginary worlds out of forts. I would suggest everyone in this room has taken part in this type of play and shared similar memories, from long summer days to a few precious after school hours. Child-organized play may have filled much of our free time.

?It takes a village to raise a child. We hear this all the time, but if we believe this to be true, then our children are Aurora's children and Aurora's responsibility. We have to provide an environment in which these children can grow and flourish. That environment must include parkland, greenspace, [and] recreational space. We want Aurora's children to be able to create the same memories we experienced. In order for them to do that, they first have to have a place to play.

?This is a rare precious parcel of land that will play a key role in our neighborhood. It will contribute to the community's wellbeing and the wellbeing of Aurora's children.?