

Community garden option for Mavrinac Park mulched by Council

By Brock Weir

Aurorans with green thumbs have been looking for wider, more open spaces for community gardens for over a year now, but when it comes to putting a community garden at the newly approved Mavrinac Park, Councillors appeared to give the idea the thumbs-down last week.

A community garden, which would plan out allotments for people in the community to grow their own vegetables and other plants, was suggested for a segment of the six acre parcel of land on Mavrinac Boulevard last week.

As part of a concept plan for the plot, Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Parks and Recreation, suggested a portion of the land in question could house a neighbourhood garden after Councillors nixed a proposal from local gardeners to transform a corner of McMahon Park into just such a project.

When that suggestion came forward last summer, a number of residents came out both for and against the plan, with those opposing the plan voicing concerns over upkeep and the pests such a garden often attracts. Facing opposition, Council directed staff to look at alternative locations for a neighbourhood garden.?

So far, this is it.

?My idea of a community garden is that it is usually located to support people who don't have back yards or have tiny back yards and can't plant their own garden,? said Councillor Harold Kim, questioning why a neighbourhood garden would be a good fit in a community with plenty of back yards.

?We felt this was the first opportunity in the development of a new park that would permit this to happen,? replied Mr. Downey. ?However, the logistics with regards to a community garden, as to the size of it, the number of plots, who would get it, [are all] things that haven't been determined at this point in time. We are more concerned with whether or not it is something Council, as well as the community, would like to see happen within the park.?

While a full public consultation hasn't yet happened, however, the people they elected to represent them were lukewarm to the idea. Councillor John Abel, for instance, said he shared the same concerns as Councillor Kim.

?In high density areas where people do not have the opportunity, [yes], but in a residential area such as this, we have already seen McMahon where people have land they can [use] for their own garden,? he said, noting vulnerability to certain elements should be taken into consideration on a garden's location if it moves forward.

Councillor Michael Thompson also offered his reservations.

?I certainly am a little concerned about community gardens given the comments and what we went through with McMahon Park and having it in a residential neighbourhood. I think we'll all hear some of the similar comments. Perhaps it is better to look at Industrial Parkway North as opposed to a residential area, but I like the fact we have a concept. It is going to start the conversation off. We already have lots of feedback from residents in the area, and I look forward to what comes out of the open house.?