

## Fleury Park improvements intended to enhance park as community destination?

Nearly \$1 million will be needed to transform Fleury Park into a true community destination, according to a report before Council this week.

Fleury Park enhancements have been in the works for more than a year, but inflation and additional proposals to increase accessibility in the popular greenspace are behind staff's recommendation to increase the project's budget from \$1.5 million to \$2.44 million.

The original approved budget authority for this project included an update of the park playground, a replacement shade structure, and additional pickleball courts, focusing primarily on asset rehabilitation, said Matthew Volpintesta, Manager of Parks and Fleet, in the report to Council. Through public consultation and review of the park redesign by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC), as well as Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), and in aligning these additional requests with recommendations from the 2023 Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP), staff are now seeking direction to proceed with a request for additional amenities and enhancement of existing amenities to elevate Fleury park for future generations, as a cornerstone destination park within the northwest quadrant of Aurora for residents and visitors alike.

In March 2025, Town staff hosted both an in-person and online information session to collect input on the enhancement and upgrades to Fleury Park, requesting feedback to help frame concept plans and include any newly proposed amenities, capturing any additional feedback that was most important to the local community. Through this engagement, over 100 survey responses were received, focusing heavily on improved accessibility, a new splashpad and detailing types of community use. Through the Engage Aurora platform, a series of questions were asked, to gather information on the age of park users, the types of uses that were most common in the current park layout, and the desire for possible additions.

Recommended to proceed immediately is rubber playground surfacing to ensure the space is barrier-free; a full-sized splashpad; and accessible playgrounds.

Set to be phased in over 2026 and 2027, pending Council's approval, are additional pickleball amenities, including covered player benches and shade structures for the eight courts and a paved pathway loop through the park.

In consideration of funding constraints, staff have proposed that the recommended Pickle Ball Court additional features and paved pathway loop park enhancements at an estimated cost of \$334,400 be phased in over the coming two years beginning in 2026, said Volpintesta. The Town does not anticipate any substantial additional costs to arise should it defer these park enhancements over the proposed time period. As much as possible, staff will 'future-ready' the park to receive these deferred recommended enhancements.

The deferral of the other proposed enhancements at Fleury Park is not recommended as it would require disruption and dismantling of newly erected features resulting in unnecessary additional cost to the Town. For example, should the proposed splashpad be deferred, it would require the removal of newly installed asphalt to accommodate below-grade plumbing, increasing the overall required budget for this enhancement substantially.

The staff report was first considered at this month's Committee of the Whole meeting where much of the discussion centred on details related to the pickleball courts.

Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland said there was a parkland deficit on the side of Aurora in question, and asked staff on the public input that came into play when deciding to make 'a little more investment' in Fleury Park.

Director of Operations Sara Tienkamp said public meetings on Fleury Park's future were well-attended and brought about 'excellent feedback' from neighbours.

?They were quite passionate about the neighborhood and that part of Town. This being a community park, it provided us some additional space and opportunity to put in some of the amenities that are lacking on the western portion of Town as illustrated in the Parks and Recreation Plan,? said Tienkamp.

?A splash pad is being recommended through the public and through staff, along with an accessible playground. Both of those are strongly recommended in the Parks and Recreation Plan for the western portion of Town. Because this is a community park [which] has all these other servicing amenities within the park of a washroom currently on site, a large capacity parking lot, the community centre's there ? it's really an ideal location and there's sports facilities already in the park as well. It's an ideal location to locate these amenities within it.?

Concerns were also raised by Councillor Gilliland, as well as by Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese, to ensure there are enough swings to go around, as some have cited an apparent lack of swings at the new playground at Town Park.

?[The Accessibility Committee] had some excellent suggestions for the accessible playground, and something that I never thought of, we make the playgrounds accessible for the children that need the accommodation, but not for the parents who might have accessibility issues,? added Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner. ?The example is, how do you push your child on the swing if you're in a wheelchair? I think we also need in the future to be thinking this through, especially with an aging population who will be taking perhaps grandchildren to the parks, we need to try and think it through so that it can be accessible to the people who are accompanying the children to the playground.?

**By Brock Weir**