

Incoming Shining Hill park's price tag rises by more than \$2.5 million

The final price tag of Thelma Fielding Park, set to be a prominent greenspace within Aurora's Shining Hill development within Yonge Street and St. John's Sideroad's northwest quadrant, could see a significant rise.

Going into this week's Council meeting, Council will consider increasing the budget for this park's development by \$2.616 million. The park was previously earmarked a budget of \$4.45 million.

Should the new financial picture be approved by local lawmakers, \$2 million of the total \$7.31 million budget will come from Parks & Recreation Development Charges (DCs), \$2.31 million from the Town's Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland Reserves, and the balance through cost recovery from Shining Hill Estates Collection Inc. and St. Anne's School.

According to a report from Sara Tienkamp, Director of Operations from the Town of Aurora, the budget increase can be attributed to a new washroom facility, accessibility enhancements, and a price increase for an artificial turf field set to be built in partnership with St. Anne's.

The Shining Hill Group received a total of four bids for the park construction and submissions were all highly competitive compared to one another, said Tienkamp in her report. The cost increase to the budget is primarily attributed to the washroom facility. The original estimate was approximately \$500,000; tender results for the building were \$960,000, and a difference of \$460,000. Building costs for structures have increased significantly and have been confirmed with our neighbouring municipalities for similar structures they have currently contracted for construction.

Also not included in the original cost estimate was a rubberized surface for the playground/splash pad. This was recommended through the Accessibility Advisory Committee and added by staff as it is the ideal safety surface, requires minimal maintenance over the lifecycle of the playground and allows for easy transition between the playground and splash pad areas. Lighting surrounding the multi-use court was also added to the design as it was recommended through [the Parks & Recreation Master Plan].

The artificial turf, she added, has contributed a price bump of \$300,000 for premium turf required for rugby use and, here, St. Anne's will fund the upgrade.

In addition, detail design works determined grade challenges that require ramps/retaining walls for accessible access, she said. Fencing has also significantly increased in height surrounding the field to accommodate the land configuration/layout in relationship to roads and proposed residential units. As the total cost of the park has risen, it has resulted in the contingency being a driver for the increased funding requirement. The preliminary design contingency was 10 per cent; however, as a safeguard it has been increased to 15 per cent.

It is important to note that this new park includes numerous amenities indicative of a Community Park setting rather than a Neighbourhood Park and, as such, it is expected the budget to construct would be greater than a typical neighbourhood park. Approximately 45 per cent of the cost of the project is for the Community Park with the other 55 per cent representing the cost of the artificial turf field that is jointly funded by the partnership.

The Aurora Barbarians Rugby Club, the report notes, is also interested in installing this type of premium turf at Sheppard's Bush to meet sport regulations and to support competitive play programs.

Staff are working with the design consultant on options and the Barbarians are willing to contribute more funding to support the upgrade, said Tienkamp. Staff support the upgrades as the Town will benefit from the premium turf as it will allow for high-level competition/tournament play, supporting sport tourism objectives as there will be three turfs available for high-level rugby games/tournaments in Aurora at Thelma Fielding Park, Sheppard's Bush, and current rugby fields located at St. Andrew's College.

?The field will also be lined to support other sports such as soccer, field hockey and flag football, which is rapidly growing among women and now an Olympic sport. In addition, the lifecycle expectancy of the turf will be greatly extended realizing cost savings for capital replacement over the long-term.?

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