

Sports fields identified in new Rec plan

By Brock Weir

Aurora has long had a shortage of soccer fields and this is a need that is underscored in the Town's new Parks and Recreation master plan.

A draft of the plan was presented to Council last week citing a number of needs, including at least three new sports fields.

These fields would ideally be located on land purchased earlier this year by the Town of Aurora adjacent to the former Hallmark building near Industrial Parkway South and Vandorf Road, according to Todd Brown of Monteith Brown Consultants, who presented highlights of the draft.

“There is a need to establish a sports field complex with at least three rectangular fields, preferably on lands adjacent to the former Hallmark building, the provision of an artificial turf field suitable for a range of sports field activities, engaging ball organizations to discuss reconfiguring the existing ball diamond to hardball and adult usage, constructing two splash pads in gap areas of the community, and the addition of a water feature within the Aurora Promenade,” said Mr. Brown, adding there are also needs for tennis, basketball and playgrounds in the Town's developing 2C community in the northwest quadrant of Leslie Street and Wellington Street.

Once approved, the new plan will chart a vision to 2021.

In setting this vision, they started with an aim to increase participation in sport through a “safe, supportive and inclusive environment” while, at the same time, providing Council with a framework to make investments in recreation, parks and sports in a “sustainable” manner.

“In considering the value of these documents, it is important to recognize the achievements that have been realised since the 2010 Master Plan,” said Mr. Brown. “These have included renewal of the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, investment in children and youth opportunities, completion of trails connections, provision of fitness trails, parks improvements and revitalization, increased participation and revenue, and the preparation of a number of planning documents, such as the Cultural Master Plan, the Trails Master Plan and the development of maintenance standards.”

But, that 2010 blue print was getting musty. 900 people participated in the drafting of the new master plan, said Mr. Brown, through workshops, online surveys, focus groups, and other engagement activities. It reflects a community that is soon set to grow by at least 8,000 and, with that, will come an aging population.

Through the public engagement process, community members stressed the importance of “flexible, multi-seasonal and multigenerational” facilities, being “proactive and efficient” in meeting future needs, and collaborating on future opportunities.

The plan also identifies the need for a new indoor gymnasium, additional multipurpose space and a potential new fitness centre at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex to meet future needs in that area, and expanding the facility itself for multigenerational programming.

“This will require an architectural study and a business plan to make sure it fits the site,” said Mr. Brown. “Based on the data to date, the current supply of arenas and indoor pools is anticipated to meet the needs of the next five years. However, we are continuing to work with Town Staff to look at the new population data as well as collect statistics on utilization as we form that recommendation.”