

## Request for Decision

### Green Space Advisory Panel Final Report

Presented To: Policy Committee

Presented: Wednesday, Jun 16, 2010

Report Date Wednesday, Jun 09, 2010

Type: Presentations

### Recommendation

Whereas the Green Space Advisory Panel of Council comprised of 27 members (citizens, experts and staff) was established in October 2007 to advance tasks identified in the Parks and Open Space Master Plan and the City's Official Plan; and

Whereas the Panel over the course of 18 meetings has now completed its assigned task given by Council which included: (1) recommending a Parks and Open Space Classification System and classifying existing parks against that system, (2) recommending natural assets for possible inclusion in the City's park and open space system, (3) recommending a parks and open space rating and evaluation system to be utilized when considering parks and open space acquisition priorities and implementation strategy, (4) recommending city owned lands in its land inventory which should be part of the City's parks and open space system, and (5) recommending a surplus parkland disposal policy;

Whereas 6 public input sessions were also held in April with respect to the Panel's findings and additional input received;

Now therefore be it resolved :

That Council provide approval in principle to the final report of the Green Space Advisory Panel presented June 16, 2010 and further:

A. That Council adopt the Parks and Open Space Classification System proposed by the Panel for its parkland assets;

B. That Council adopt the surplus parkland disposal policy for dealing with City land assets which may fall into a surplus position;

C. That Council provide approval in principle to the listing of natural assets for possible inclusion in the City's park and open space system, as well as, the priority rating methodology for evaluating potential parkland acquisitions and that staff be instructed to utilize these tools in future deliberations or when parkland opportunities arise;

#### Signed By

**Report Prepared By**

Bill Lautenbach  
General Manager of Growth and  
Development  
*Digitally Signed Jun 9, 10*

**Recommended by the Department**

Bill Lautenbach  
General Manager of Growth and  
Development  
*Digitally Signed Jun 9, 10*

**Recommended by the C.A.O.**

Doug Nadorozny  
Chief Administrative Officer  
*Digitally Signed Jun 9, 10*

- D. That Council direct staff to prepare a budget option for next years budgeting process for park and open space acquisition which could be utilized for green space purchase opportunities or matching funds;
- E. That Council recommends the continuation of this Panel with renewed membership in the new year with a clear mandate to assist Council in the implementation of green space acquisition and development strategy; and
- F. That the work of the Green Space Advisory Panel be utilized as input in the next review of the Official Plan.

## Executive Summary

In many ways, green spaces define a community. Bring to mind a neighbourhood playground, a baseball diamond, a nature trail, a wetland, a community garden, the natural landscape that tells you you are home: all of these are green spaces. From childhood to old age, they form an integral part of our sense of place and our quality of life. They contribute to a healthy, active lifestyle, and a healthy environment. They provide natural services, improve community resilience and livability, lower green house gas emissions, and generate economic benefits. In Northern Ontario, access to outdoor recreation is part of who we are. In Greater Sudbury, the decades of reclamation and revegetation efforts brings a special appreciation and responsibility of stewardship for the natural beauty we so enjoy. This is reflected in the importance given to our natural environment in the Official Plan, the Healthy Community Strategy, and the Local Action Plan. In addition, the City of Greater Sudbury Official Plan and the Parks, Open Space and Leisure Background Report and Master Plan outlined specific objectives relating to green spaces.

Specifically, Council established in the new Official Plan that two programs be undertaken with respect to green space:

### 7.2.1 Programs

*"2. A park classification system to address the range of Parks and Open Space types and characteristics will be established to guide park acquisition, development, and management. The park classification system will have regard to natural beauty, environmental functions, and recreation value."*

*"4. Further delineate natural environment areas in need of municipal protection along with appropriate strategies for conservation and acquisition."*

On **October 24th, 2007, Council appointed the Green Space Advisory Panel to implement these Official Plan programs.** In addition to the recognition of the value of a comprehensive strategy regarding green spaces in Greater Sudbury, there was a need to address recurring green space issues such as citizen concerns over new developments, and decisions around the disposal or purchase of leisure service properties.

The panel was given the mandate to:

- Recommend to Council a Parks and Open Space Classification System which is suitable for the City of Greater Sudbury as per Official Plan program # 2.
- Recommend to Council natural assets which should be considered for inclusion in the City's Park and Open Space System as per Official Plan program # 4.
- Recommend to Council a rating or evaluation system which might be utilized to assist Council in establishing acquisition priorities and making park and open space acquisitions.
- Review the City property inventory and recommend to Council properties to be included in the Leisure Services portfolio and identify those Leisure Services properties which should be declared surplus to

parks and open space needs and disposed of as per Official Plan policy 7.2.1 (8).

There are twenty-seven members of the Green Space Advisory Panel, including citizen representatives, citizen experts, and City staff. The Panel is comprised of the following members:

Samantha Baulch	Peter Beckett
Don Brisebois	Elaine Comacchio-Blais
Gerard Courtin	Naomi Grant
Robert Hanson	Will Kershaw
Keir Kitchen	Michel Lauzon
Franco Mariotti	Warren Maskell
Deb McIntosh	William R. Morin
Dr. H. Beaumont Nelson	John Rauh
Paul Sajatovic	Lorne Taylor
Roel A. Teunissen	

The staff implementation team is:

Bill Lautenbach - General Manager of Growth & Development

Paul Baskcomb - Acting Director of Planning Services

Chris Gore - Manager of Community Partnerships

Keith Forrester - Real Estate Coordinator

Ian Wood - Chief of Staff to the Mayor

Kris Longston - Senior Planner, Community & Strategic Planning

Krista Carré - Senior Planning Technician

Stephen Monet - Manager of Environmental Planning Initiatives

Public input was sought during public open houses and on-line, during April 2010.

Over the past two and a half years, the panel has drafted the following items for Council's consideration:

- A Parks Classification System
- A list of existing parks classified
- A Surplus Parkland Disposal Policy
- A rating structure for potential acquisitions; and
- A list of green space opportunities.

This report also includes a discussion of acquisition strategies, and recommendations for moving the work forward.

### **A Parks Classification System**

Our vision:

*The Greater Sudbury parkland system meets local, community and city-wide needs for accessible*

*and safe outdoor recreation and education, contributes to a high quality of life for present and future residents, and preserves significant natural features and functions in perpetuity.*

A classification system is an important tool for evaluating and managing the parks and open space system. The parkland system meets citizens' needs for natural beauty, outdoor recreation and outdoor education, and fulfills our responsibility as stewards of our natural environment. The classification system reflects these many diverse park types, uses, and values.

Parks were classified as:

- Neighbourhood park - to meet the recreational needs of its immediate neighbourhood.
- Community park - to provide the space and supportive facilities needed for active recreation.
- Regional park - to be a focal point for the City as a whole.
- Linear park - to be a connector for people and/or wildlife.
- Natural park - to protect a natural area while meeting residents' needs for passive recreation.
- Cultural/historical special purpose park - to protect sites with historic, scientific, cultural, social, or spiritual importance; or to serve a special, specific purpose.
- Ecological reserve - to protect significant natural areas with ecological and/or geological importance, or that capture a characteristic natural feature of the City.

For each park type, the purpose, general description and use, facilities and features, size, and service area/standard were determined. The provision standards aim for every child and adult resident to be within an easy walk of a neighbourhood park and a natural park, and within a 20-minute walk or a short bike ride to a community park. The system of parks is meant to be a connected network, accessible to residents and wildlife of the Greater Sudbury region.

### **An inventory of green spaces**

In order to develop a comprehensive strategy for green spaces, make informed decisions, properly manage existing parks and open space, and identify gaps and opportunities, an inventory of green spaces is required.

The Green Space Advisory Panel completed an inventory in three parts:

- An inventory of lands in the existing Parks and Open Space system
- An inventory of other public lands and other recreational lands; and
- An inventory of green space opportunities - natural assets which should be considered for inclusion in the City's Park and Open Space System.

These inventories were compiled using GIS mapping, staff knowledge, and knowledge from the panel and the wider community. Sites were classified with the draft Classification System as appropriate, and other pertinent information was also noted, such as location, size, features and facilities, ownership, zoning and land designation.

### **Establishing acquisition priorities**

Having identified green space opportunities, the next step in moving forward is to prioritize these sites in regards to acquisition. The panel developed a system for establishing acquisition priorities. Using defined criteria, the panel rated green space opportunities according to conservation value, recreation value, and level of risk. The corresponding acquisition value could then be evaluated in a consistent manner. In broad terms, acquisition priority is rated higher for sites with high recreation or conservation value, and for vulnerable sites. Need is another factor influencing acquisition priorities. Therefore, a gap analysis will be an important tool in assessing acquisition priorities.

### **Acquisition strategies**

In order to meet the goals of a balanced park system that is: accessible to all residents, meets parkland needs throughout Greater Sudbury, and protects areas of ecological, geological and cultural significance, an effective acquisition strategy is required. The challenge that will be faced in the future is how to address the desire to add to the Green Space inventory with limited financial resources and how to strategically focus acquisition efforts.

Four overarching goals guide the acquisition strategy:

1. Protect ecologically valuable, environmentally sensitive, or unique natural assets.
2. Create and complete networks of physical linkages for people and wildlife.
3. Create and complete a balanced, interconnected parks system meeting local, community and regional passive and active recreational needs.
4. Protect the unique aesthetic and geographic character of the community.

In practical terms, these goals can be met by bringing sites with high/moderate recreation and conservation values into the parks inventory, and filling gaps in the existing parks system.

City owned green space opportunities which have a high/moderate conservation and/or recreation value should be zoned as parkland (or a similar zoning category) and brought into the parks inventory over time.

For non-city owned green space opportunities, the highest priority should be given to sites that are ecologically important or sensitive, are important natural assets, or would have high recreational value. The acquisition priority ranking should generally guide future acquisitions and the order in which acquisitions should be addressed. From time to time, significant opportunities to acquire more moderately scored lands may arise and the flexibility to take advantage of these situations should be maintained. The City's Official Plan and Parks, Open Space and Leisure Master Plan contain targets for the amount and location of park properties in the community which will also inform acquisition decisions. The Parks, Open Space and Leisure background report also contains information on which areas of the City are deficient in parkland. It is important to address the parkland needs of these areas, and to complete an updated gap analysis.

By following this acquisition strategy, the City of Greater Sudbury can achieve a parks system that protects important natural features and functions, meets citizens' park needs throughout the community, provides linkages for people and for wildlife, and maintains our city's unique landscape and natural beauty.

### **Park Land Disposal Policy**

Residents accord special value to parkland. Therefore, additional measures should be taken when considering parkland as surplus, as compared with other City-owned land. In recognition of this, a Park Land Disposal Policy was developed.

The policy consists of three sections:

- The criteria that must be met in order to consider whether to declare a site surplus.
- The requirements for public notification and public input.
- The use of funds from the sale of surplus parkland.

### **Recommendations and next steps**

The panel recommends that Council approve in principle the final report of the Green Space Advisory Panel dated June 16, 2010. In addition, a number of specific recommendations are made, as stated in the "Recommendation for Council Adoption", attached to the report. The panel recommends that the work specifically mandated by Council be adopted, to fulfill programs 7.2.1.2 and 7.2.1.4 of the Official Plan.

This includes the adoption of the parkland classification system, the parkland disposal policy, and the identification, evaluation and prioritization of green space opportunities.

Furthermore, the panel has a number of recommendations that are necessary for the successful implementation of the acquisition strategy. Financial resources will be necessary to proceed with acquisitions of non-city owned green space opportunities. Therefore, the recommendation is made that Council direct staff to prepare a budget option for next year's budgeting process for park and open space acquisition. The panel also recommends that this work be utilized as input in the next review of the Official Plan. Finally, to move forward with a comprehensive green space strategy and the implementation of the acquisition strategy, the recommendation is made to continue the panel, with a mandate defined to meet identified needs and gaps. A number of important work was identified for the next panel. Assessing connectivity, completing a gap analysis, advising and assisting with implementation, examining further opportunities, and advising on the Official Plan review were identified as priorities.

The Green Space Advisory Panel has now basically completed the mandate initially given to it by Council. Attached (under separate cover) is the final Advisory Panel report which has the support of the entire Panel. The Panel recommends that Council adopt its proposed Parks and Open Space Classification System and a Surplus Parkland Disposal Policy. The Panel also recommends that a budget option be prepared for parkland acquisition for the next budget process and that the Panel be continued during the term of the next Council with a new mandate and renewed membership. The Panel also recommends that the work of the Panel be utilized during the next Official Plan Review and that Council approve the remainder of its report in principle.

**NOTE: Final Report attached under separate cover.**