

Community Services Report to
SPC on Community and Protective Services
2016 April 06

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CPS2016-0275

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ITEM: Urgent Business 13.3
Distribution

CITY CLERK'S DEPARTMENT

CLEARWATER PARK DEVELOPMENT PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 2016 January 15, the Standing Policy Committee on Community and Protective Services referred Report CPS2016-0040 (Clearwater Park Development Plan) back to Administration to report back with a status update no later than 2016 June. An in camera discussion around Report LAS2015-52 at the 2016 January 11 Council meeting also led to a request for Administration to further clarify the proposed development phasing of Clearwater Park and how the Southwest Calgary Ring Road (SWRR) will impact the park. This report addresses these two requests for information and also provides further detail on the plans for a constructed wetland within Phase 1 of the Clearwater Park development.

The City acquired the Clearwater Park site in 1979 through a donation of lands from the Devonian Group of Charitable Foundations. The Clearwater Park Development Plan (Attachment 1) was created through a public engagement process and is intended to serve as a guide for the development of the future park. The main objectives of the preliminary design were to optimize and retain the existing uses in the park, protect and enhance the natural environment along the Elbow River, and provide an environmental education component in the park. The Clearwater Park Preferred Concept Plan (Attachment 2) outlines the proposed development.

Administration is seeking approval of the concept plan that will trigger additional funding for the park development through both the land sale tied to the Southwest Calgary Ring Road (LAS2015-51) and the negotiated wetland relocation. As the land sale is closing on 2016 April 15 this report needs to be forwarded to Council on 2016 April 11 as an item of urgent business.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the SPC on Community Services and Protective Services recommend that Council:

1. Receive for information the Clearwater Park Development Plan (Attachment 1);
2. Approve the Clearwater Park Preferred Concept Plan (Attachment 2); and
3. Receive this report as an item of urgent business at the 2016 April 11 Council meeting.

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES,
DATED 2016 APRIL 06:**

That Council:

1. Receive for information the Clearwater Park Development Plan (Attachment 1);
2. Approve the Clearwater Park Preferred Concept Plan (Attachment 2); and

Opposition to Recommendations:

Opposed: G-C. Carra

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that will promote early outdoor learning through natural inquiry for Calgary students. This project was included and approved by Council as part of the ENMAX Legacy Park Program Phase 1.

The Clearwater Park Development Plan was created through an extensive engagement process and is intended to serve as a guide for the development of the future park. The main objectives of the preliminary design were to optimize and retain the existing uses within the park, and to protect and enhance the natural environment along the Elbow River. The park will continue to offer unique environmental education and outdoor recreational opportunities to youth and families, including wetland education initiatives and youth group camping.

Throughout the Clearwater Park development and stakeholder engagement process, a wetland feature had always been envisioned as an important landscape component for the site. With the subsequent announcement from Alberta Transportation (2007) of two highway projects: Southwest Calgary Ring Road and Highway 8 twinning; negotiations between The City and the Province were initiated to find a suitable replacement location for the existing Elbow Valley constructed wetlands which would be displaced by the highway expansion. As a result of these discussions, Clearwater Park was deemed a suitable location for facilitating stormwater runoff from the highway within the planned wetland development proposed for Clearwater Park Phase 1. This created an opportunity to leverage the park project with funds from the Province contributing to the wetland construction. The twinning of Highway 8 is expected to occur with the Southwest Calgary Ring Road (SWRR) project, which is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2016 and be complete by the end of 2021. The City and the Province continue to work together to integrate stormwater management elements and other components of the SWRR project that will impact the park.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

In 2011, Administration retained a design consulting firm and scope for this initial phase of work was to establish a park development plan and design concept to guide future development for Clearwater Park. Community engagement was undertaken with input from the public, City staff (internal stakeholders) and external stakeholders.

This engagement process along with a biophysical inventory and assessment, and analysis of current conditions and future needs of the region drove the creation of the Clearwater Park Development Plan (Attachment 1). The Development Plan reflects the vision for the park:

“Clearwater Park is a unique legacy park, representing the nature and culture of the lands surrounding Calgary. It is an oasis, focusing on nature conservation and environmental education. The site is a jewel that protects what is precious; land, air, water, and natural areas. The park is connected to the regional trail system.”

The Clearwater Preferred Concept Plan (Attachment 2) outlines key features of the future park including:

- A signed entry road leading to pockets of parking and a drop-off area.
- Major new features such as a washroom building, large and small picnic shelters, enhanced campsite area with yurts in place of tipis, and a constructed wetland feature.
- Enhanced links to the regional pathway system and improved trail network including boardwalks and viewing platforms adjacent to the wetland.

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the only City park overnight camping opportunity for schools, community groups and private groups.

Environmental

The Preferred Concept Plan (Attachment 2) includes designs that will sustain the park's sensitive riparian ecosystems and promote responsible use of these spaces. Part of Clearwater Park could contain a new constructed wetland for the treatment and management of stormwater runoff (from the Highway 8 expansion) that would be mutually beneficial to The City and the Province. The Clearwater Park wetland will act as an upstream source of protection to the Glenmore Reservoir. The constructed wetland will also help to compensate for the loss of the Elbow Valley Constructed Wetland, which has been the location for a popular environmental education program.

Economic (External)

High quality park space favourably impacts the image and economy of Calgary and is associated with indirect benefits including but not limited to increased land values and community desirability.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

The proposed development will impact operational costs as new park assets are added and park usage increases. Administration has completed a preliminary analysis of anticipated operational costs. Initial estimates indicate up to \$100,000 in new operational costs which will be offset through minor revenue. These costs will be refined as detailed design and construction occurs. Administration will bring forward a funding request through the budget process at the appropriate time.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

Capital improvements noted in the redevelopment plan have been estimated at \$7.8 million. Clearwater Park currently has \$700,000 of capital funding from the ENMAX Legacy Park Program. Negotiations with the Province on compensation for the Elbow Valley wetland and site improvements have been concluded and may provide up to \$4 million in funding for the wetland and adjacent site development at Clearwater Park (Phase 1), subject to the approval of the Preferred Concept Plan (Attachment 2). Administration will continue to coordinate with the Province's road construction timelines and phase accordingly.

The balance of current funding for the development of Clearwater Park will be realized through the land sale at Clearwater tied to the Southwest Calgary Ring Road (LAS2015-51).

Risk Assessment

Negotiations with the Province have been ongoing and Southwest Calgary Ring Road construction is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2016. The progress of construction of the Highway 8 expansion will have an impact on the overall design, timing and development of the park. If the Preferred Concept Plan (Attachment 2) is not approved, funding from the Province will not be realized for the wetland and adjacent site development at Clearwater Park (Phase 1).